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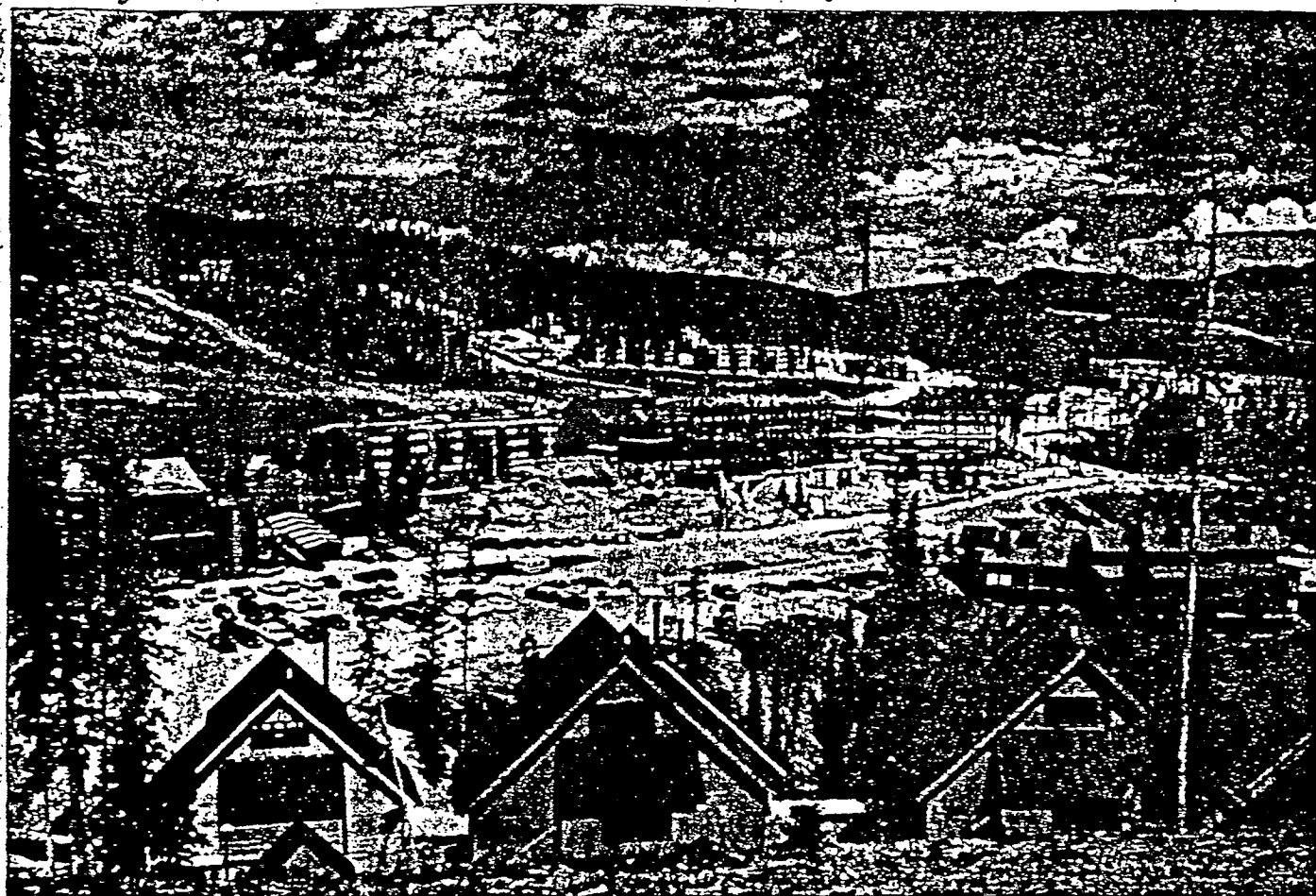


PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG SKY

Crews erect the steel frame of the 20,000-square-foot Yellowstone Convention Center at Big Sky's Mountain Village.

Big Sky building right on target

By ROXANA HEGEMAN

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Construction of a \$10 million convention center and condominium development in Big Sky Resort's Mountain Village is right on schedule with completion slated for next summer, said Taylor Middleton, Big Sky marketing director.

The facility, the state's largest tourism-related construction project, will draw conventions here from throughout the county.

The 20,000-square-foot Yellowstone Convention Center and adjoining 94-unit Shoshone Condominiums are funded by Big Sky's parent company, Michigan-based Boyne, U.S.A.

"There is nothing like this in Montana," Middleton said.

Big Sky needed more accommodations during the winter and it needed conference facilities in the summer.

The new convention center will let the resort seat more than 750 guests at a banquet, he added.

"It will bring more people to this area," he said, adding that it will also help the economy of Bozeman.

The annual economic impact of the new convention center is projected to be \$3 to \$5 million, Middleton said.

During the first year of operations, the center will generate

between 30 to 50 new jobs. Eventually, it will provide as many as 60 jobs.

During the construction phase, between 50 to 100 people will be working on the project now being erected in double shifts.

All the construction and materials are being purchased from Montana companies. Taylor Construction of Bozeman is handling the construction. The steel is being purchased from Billings. The concrete supplies are being bought in Bozeman and the plumbing is being done by a Gallatin Valley firm.

The development sits in front of the Huntley Lodge at the base of the resort's downhill ski runs and will replace the lodge as the centerpiece of the Mountain Village.

"There are very few facilities like this in the Rocky Mountains," Middleton said.

Big Sky is already booking conventions for the center this summer, he added.

"We are a national draw," he added.

Construction began in April. Two shifts a day are now working to put up the sixth floor. The final section will go up in 10 days.

"It is pretty spectacular," Middleton said.